



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Connecticut Administered State-Funded Program General Policy C-01

___ OEC Child Day Care Contractors
X OEC Competitive School Readiness Municipalities
X OEC Priority School Readiness Districts
___ OEC State Head Start Supplement
___ OEC Smart Start

TO: Mayors, Superintendents, School Readiness Council Chairs/Co-Chairs and Liaisons

FROM: Harriet Feldlaufer, Director
Division of Early Care and Education

SUBJECT: School Readiness Council Membership, Responsibilities, and the Role of the Liaison

In order to satisfy the School Readiness Statute under Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) section 10-16r (a), local School Readiness Councils (SCRs) must be developed and include representatives from the following:

The chief elected official of the town or, in the case of a regional school district, the chief elected officials of the towns in the school district and the superintendent of schools for the school district shall jointly appoint and convene such council. Each school readiness council shall be composed of: (1) The chief elected official, or the official's designee; (2) the superintendent of schools, or a management level staff person as the superintendent's designee; (3) parents; (4) representatives from local programs such as Head Start, family resource centers, nonprofit and for-profit child care centers, group child care homes, prekindergarten and nursery schools, and family child care home providers; (5) a representative from a health care provider in the community; (6) the local homeless education liaison designated by the local or regional board of education for the school district, pursuant to Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 USC 11431 et seq., as amended from time to time; and (7) other representatives from the community who provide services to children. The chief elected official shall designate the chairperson of the school readiness council.

SCRs may also consider the inclusion of local librarians as members of the SRC to assist in implementing the required collaborative agreement between local libraries and providers.

As outlined in the School Readiness Statute under C.G.S. section 10-16r (b), the local SRC shall:

- Make recommendations to the chief elected official and the superintendent of schools on issues relating to School Readiness, including any applications for grants pursuant to sections 10-16p, 10-16u, 17b-749a and 17b-749c of the C.G.S.;

- foster partnerships among providers of School Readiness programs;
- cooperate with the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in any program evaluation, use measures developed pursuant to section 10-16s of the C.G.S. for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of School Readiness programs;
- identify existing and prospective resources and services available to children and families;
- facilitate the coordination of the delivery of services to children and families, including (1) referral procedures, and (2) before- and after-school child care for children attending kindergarten programs;
- exchange information with other SRCs and community organizations serving children and families;
- make recommendations to school officials concerning the transition from School Readiness programs to kindergarten; and
- encourage public participation.

Two or more towns or school districts and appropriate representatives of groups or entities interested in early childhood education in a region may establish a regional SRC. If a priority school is located in at least one of such school districts, the regional SRC may apply for a grant pursuant to subsection (d) of section 10-16p of the C.G.S. The regional SRC should perform the duties outlined in the section above.

School Readiness Council Structure:

Refer to SRC membership as outlined above in legislation. For further clarification:

- The chief elected official and the superintendent, or their designees, are members of the SRC. The chief elected official designates the chair or co-chairs.
- The chief elected official convenes the SRC and leads in collaboration with the superintendent.

To avoid administrative conflicts of interest, the following guidelines are provided:

- The OEC recommends having co-chairs for SRC.
- Program directors that receive School Readiness funds, School Readiness liaisons, or direct supervisors of liaisons are not eligible to be chairs or co-chairs of the SRC.
- Program directors that receive School Readiness funds, School Readiness liaisons, or direct supervisors of liaisons may not be designees on behalf of the chief elected official or superintendent.
- When the chief elected official or superintendent and their designees attend SRC meetings, the chief elected official and the superintendent vote, the designees do not vote. When designees represent the chief elected official or the superintendent, the designees vote on their behalf.

School Readiness Council By-Laws and Decision-making:

SRCs should have written by-laws and policies that describe decision-making processes utilizing the existing State School Readiness policies as a foundation. By-laws and policies should not favor one sector (example: public school, community provider).

Recommendations for funding and all SRC work shall not be overruled by the chief elected official or superintendent or any other governing body at the local level. The SRC is a collaborative network charged with planning to serve all 3- and 4-year old children in high quality programs.

The intent is:

- To engage in shared and informed decision-making; for example, informed by the cross-sector membership of the SRC. Since the involvement of the chief elected official and superintendent offices is required, all matters and decisions are discussed and voted upon openly at SRC meetings;
- School Readiness liaisons do not vote on SRC matters;
- Early childhood providers do not vote on distribution of funds;
- The fiduciary (the Town, Board of Education, Regional Education Service Center [RESC], the Human Resource Agency, or Department of Health/Youth Services) assists the SRC with fiscal responsibilities associated with the administration of the grant. The fiduciary's governing body does not hold decision-making authority regarding the administration, coordination, or evaluation of the School Readiness grant, including funding decisions.

The Role of the SRC Liaison:

The liaison is responsible for the coordination, program evaluation and administration of the School Readiness Grant and serves as liaison between the local or regional SRC and the OEC. One of the primary responsibilities is to recruit eligible programs for potential funding (see appendix: Role of the Liaison).

To ensure bias-free implementation of the grant, it is necessary that the Liaison remain impartial. The following guidance is provided:

- The liaison may be a contracted position with an independent consultant or an educational organization. The liaison may be employed by the municipality, RESC, Local Education Agency (LEA), Community Action Program, etc.
- The liaison must be supervised by an individual who is not directly overseeing programs that receive School Readiness funds.
 - Example: Liaisons can be supervised by non-program administrators such as an assistant superintendent, mayor or administrative staff not directly overseeing funded programs. Program administrators receiving School Readiness funds may not supervise liaisons.
- Liaisons are specifically charged with the administration, coordination, and evaluation of the School Readiness grant in collaboration with the OEC. Program directors and/or staff who work in programs that receive School Readiness funds may not act as the liaison, however, exceptions may be granted. The School Readiness Council should seek assistance from the OEC program manager if an exception is being considered.

It is the responsibility of the SRCs and the liaisons to share this information with their sub-grantees and ensure that each program is in compliance with these guidelines in order for sub-grantees to receive funding as a School Readiness program.

For further information concerning this GENERAL POLICY, please contact:

SCHOOL READINESS
Andrea Brinnel Program Manager 860-713-6771 andrea.brinnel@ct.gov

General Policy C-01 Appendix
Roles and Responsibilities in the Administration, Coordination and Evaluation of the School Readiness Program

The designated person(s) responsible for coordination, program evaluation and administration and who acts as liaison between the local or regional School Readiness Council (SRC) and the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) shall:

- Maintain ongoing communication between the OEC, the local or regional SRC, the mayor (or designee), the superintendent (or designee) and the sub-grantees.
- Serves as staff to the SRC and be responsible for:
 - Meeting agendas
 - Meeting minutes
 - Completing reports, (e.g. unmet needs, utilization, fiscal, school readiness monthly reports, annual Quality Enhancement report and Connecticut School Readiness Preschool Program Evaluation System [CSRPPES]).
 - Maintaining SRC membership
 - Communicating legislative requirements of the School Readiness grant
 - Providing resources to and guiding, reviewing and updating policy and procedure development with the SRC
- Oversee the School Readiness and Quality Enhancement grant application processes using the OEC template and following local procurement processes:
 - Author the Community School Readiness and Quality Enhancement requests for proposals
 - Coordinate the development of the Letters of Agreement
 - Organize the review of proposals and submit program allocation recommendations to the SRC for approval
 - Manage the delivery of the award letter to the city for the local acceptance and approval process
 - Provide technical assistance to individual programs applying for School Readiness funds
 - Work with the local fiscal agent to ensure the proper expenditure of funds
 - Develop contracts with School Readiness sub-grantees
- Provide outreach to the community to assist families in the enrollment process for School Readiness and other early care opportunities.
- Meet regularly with SR providers to provide a forum to:
 - Share information and best practices
 - Review and clarify policies
 - Disseminate information
 - Assess needs and set priorities
 - Problem solve
 - Share resources
 - Develop collaborative initiatives
 - Provide technical assistance on policies and practices related to the School Readiness Quality Components or seek those with expertise to provide assistance.

- Conduct regular site visits* to monitor compliance with all of the School Readiness grant regulations and develop action plans as appropriate. The areas to be regularly monitored include:
 - Fiscal and policy compliance
 - Staff qualifications
 - Attendance
 - Family fees
 - Annual State Single Audits required for programs receiving \$300,000 or more of state funds
 - Curriculum and assessment
 - Accreditation and approval timelines
 - Licensing
 - Professional development activities
 - Program adherence to all School Readiness components
- Collaborate with local school systems and early care and education programs to develop and implement local transition to kindergarten plans
- Manage and archive records
- Attend OEC scheduled liaison meetings
- Respond to OEC requests for information
- Support the development and ongoing implementation of the community's early childhood plan
- Represent the SRC in the community and across the state

* The School Readiness liaison is responsible for monitoring individual sub-grantees. While monitoring activities may be subcontracted out, indicators related to the areas of curriculum and assessment must be assessed by someone with early childhood expertise and experience.

Developed collaboratively by the OEC and SRC liaisons